

Dear Friends,

Heiney News, 1/24/07

Well, yesterday marked the beginning of week 3 of the country wide strike here in Guinea. Most things continue to be at a stop and few vehicles are on the road - a far cry from the normally three-deep-on-a-two-lane-road we usually have to battle daily around here. Much has happened since I last wrote but things keep changing so quickly it's hard to keep up.

Monday was bad. It was really the worst day in terms of negative activity going on. I'll let the news report cover it for me...if you haven't already seen the article you can read about it at:

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/IRIN/764468a80976126c9f361b39f005d019.htm> . Honestly it was the first time we started wondering if we might really have to up and leave for a while. Should things continue in that direction it would only get worse. Tim's bag is packed behind me as I write and I have my list of things ready to grab should I need to. A call to Tim and Heidi revealed that things had turned extremely sour in Siguiiri where they are working, in the upper northeast part of the country. The Peace Corps was ready to evacuate their people and the Nortons were considering heading to Bamako (Mali, just north of Guinea) as well.

Then yesterday morning came and we all waited anxiously for news. The mission community here in Conakry all have short range radios on which we can communicate which makes it excellent in crisis situations. Since we have missionaries all over the city each can call in and report what they are seeing in their neighborhood. We've often heard calls come in such as, " There's a mob of people outside my door gathering garbage to burn..." "Military trucks just passed our house firing guns into the air..." "Gunfire being heard in our neighborhood." The daughter of one missionary family works at the US embassy so we were also getting regular updates on where they were at and what was happening in that area of town. In this way we can be prepared for whenever the embassy should happen to begin evacuating their non-essential personnel. The photo I sent last time was sent from a CMA missionary who just recently started a radio station and who is continuing to head to work each morning. So we have really been able to keep pretty well on top of things. And with the internet now news is just a click away.

So it was like breathing fresh air yesterday when the first message from our mission radio was that there was to be a "day off of striking" that day as negotiations started. The Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) was planning to send a delegation to meet and try and help resolve issues in Guinea. Guinea is quite an important player in this part of the world. As you've probably read, much of the world's bauxite comes from this country, and that affects parts of the world outside Africa. Also, we are surrounded by countries that have been troubled by unrest for over a decade and are now trying to get back on their feet. What would war here do to countries like Sierra Leone and Liberia where you have a generation that grew up with guns in their hands? Another call to Tim and Heidi indicated that the same was happening their way as well. All had been quiet that day. They had heard that missionaries in Kankan were staying put so they were hanging on as well. We agreed, however, that should ANYTHING look threatening that they would leave immediately for Bamako.

So a large WHOOP when out when the announcement came and shortly after that we started getting messages about what stores were opening up for a short time to give people a chance to restock on some food supplies. Some were even speculating that the strike could be over by today! Out we went. The streets had some cars but we made it to the store in record time with little traffic on the road. I think everyone's spirits were lifted as people set out to shop, visit friends and just get out of the house! We all wondered where this would head. But we had doubts even with this good news as: 1) so far we'd heard no indication that either side was ready to compromise, and 2) strikes in the past have led to promises never kept. We could only watch and see.

This morning I found the following on the net: <http://www.voanews.com/english/Africa/2007-01-25-voa6.cfm>. It is exciting news but it's hard to get too excited until we get the feel of what people think of all this. Is this a promise that will be kept? Do people trust it? I'm sure we'll hear more today and see where we are headed. The situation is critical at this point. The price of rice has skyrocketed to over three times what it was before the strike, IF you can find it. And before the strike people considered it almost beyond their means. The economy is, in essence, at a halt. There is little meat to be found in stores anymore and the electricity is a joke (we're probably running at about 50 volts instead of 220!)

Prayers are obvious! If this is truly a compromise and a promise kept maybe we can get through this without any more dying or injured. If so it would indeed be the hand of God just from looking at this from the eyes of the people here. Pray that things stay calm and that today brings real good news for the Guineans!!

Thanks for your unending prayers and your many words of encouragement and support!! I can't believe our internet has kept going through all this!! That has been a huge blessing and we are thankful daily!! God be with you and God be with this country!

In Christ, Tim and Beth, Katie and Andrea

Dear Friends,

Heiney Update, 1/25/07

I feel like we are on a roller coaster sometimes with the ups and downs that have plagued this strike. One day there is good news, the next falls apart, then we're back up again.

Not long after I wrote yesterday we had a message on the radio saying that people were dancing in the streets in a neighborhood between us and town. Word was that a new prime minister had been named and it was someone that was approved of by the unions and the people in general. He was said to have been in the government in the past but was ousted when he tried to clean up corruption. You could almost hear the jubilation as news made its way down the street...first a ways away, then louder and louder. Soon cars were driving by honking their horns and people were laughing and shouting right outside. They all said that it's finished, the strike is over, we have a new prime minister.

Could it be that easy? The news was definitely good and a huge step in the right direction, but would things just go that simply? We had to wonder. Still it was hard not to get wrapped up in the hope and joy that was evident on each face. Maybe our lives can be different? Maybe we can afford to eat again. And hour later the lights came on at what had to be the closest we've been to full force in weeks!! And it stayed on all night. Even if it wasn't all right, life just felt really good. I think everyone's stress level dropped about 10 notches.

I'm not going to speculate on where this is going. I wish that I could report that the strike is totally finished, we have a new prime minister that will change the country for the better and life is going to go on as before but better. Maybe I still just want to bask in the hope. Word has it now that the strike will not officially end until there is a new constitution in place. That makes sense as, like I said, so many promises have come and gone. People want to SEE a difference, not just hear it. So by all means, keep praying!! But for this morning, as I sit and listen to vehicles back out on the road (Tim even went out today to try and find some of his leaders) I'm thankful that in this crazy, sinful, and often evil world, there is a God who keeps ALL His promises. And just as I am a visitor here in Guinea, I am a visitor here on this earth, just passing through on my way to a much better place.

In Christ,

beth for all ><

Dear all,

Heiney News, 1/29/07

After the last letter we began to hear all kinds of rumors as to what was going on and where things were headed. It was really hard to know what to think or believe. We heard a prime minister was chosen, then heard that it wasn't the one we'd heard about, then that there was no PM chosen at all! The strike is over; no, it's suspended; no, it's still on. Very confusing!! Even looking on the internet you can read the title of one article, "Guinea to get new premier; Strike ends" right above one that says, "Despite agreement, Guinea populations says strike is by no means over."

It was finally announced this weekend that yes, a prime minister has been chosen and the president has agreed to delegate some power to him. Unions are hoping for a transition in power. People are hoping for improved conditions in the country. One thing is certain: prices must come down and food become affordable. Therefore while the strike is not "over" it has been suspended/put on hold if you will. Stores are reopening and people are beginning to work again. But all are waiting to see what this all has come to mean for them in the long run.

While we know that God loves us and cares for every aspect of our lives, we know that his heart is for the lost, so please pray with us that God will use these events and this time to draw people to Him; to give them the desire to know who He really is. He is the bread of life and the living water - spiritual drink in this dry, dry land. And praise Him with us for holding back the evil that could have set this country aflame during all this. May it continue peacefully and, in the end, glorify Him!

In Christ, The Heineys

PS. If you are interested in reading more I suggest: <http://www.voanews.com/english/Africa/2007-01-29-voa5.cfm>

Dear Friends,

Heiney Update, 2/6/07

We are happy to announce that Andrea Herman is finally on the way to Guinea! She was scheduled to come some weeks ago but because of the strike we decided to hold it off as traveling was not safe within the country. She will be arriving tonight at 9:10 PM our time (4:10 PM EST) so we'd appreciate your prayers that all goes well and that God blesses our time together here as a field. Tim and Heidi Norton will arrive tomorrow and all will be staying in the newly opened "Conakry Lutheran Guesthouse"! We're so thankful to the Kansas District for helping us to make that guesthouse a reality. Of course as things go here, just before all these guests arrive we are having water trouble (James and Tiina May can tell you that this only happens when guests are coming!!) and my house helper quit. Sigh. Such is life. HOWEVER, we're excited to add Andrea to our team here and beg your prayers for her as she begins her new ministry among the Maninka women in Siguiiri. She'll jump right into language learning when she arrives and is anxious to get to know the people she is working with. We're so thankful too that things have remained calm enough here in Guinea that we are able to do this. We will spend about a week together as a team, getting reacquainted and sharing and praying together.

Thank you all again for your incredible support while we were going through our "crisis" here. We appreciate each letter sent and know that prayers were flying fast toward the heavens. Continue to pray for changes here in Guinea and for resolution to all the troubles, for good leadership and especially that God will open the ears of all hearing His glorious message!

Blessings, The Heineys

Dear Friends,

Heiney Update, 2/12/07

A lot has happened since my last letter, some good, some not so good.

Andrea Herman arrived safely on the 6th. All her bags arrived with her which was a nice change of pace. On the 7th Tim and Heidi Norton arrived with their two children, Philip and Leslie. Our plan was to meet in Conakry, do some shopping and orientation, then head to Dalaba, northeast of here, for a quiet time of retreat and prayer.

On the way to Conakry Tim Norton heard that another strike was planned for Monday. A prime minister still has not been named and therefore the people would continue to fight for this. When we all got together we had to decide how best to plan from here. We decided to cancel the retreat, do the necessary items here in Conakry and send our teams up as soon as possible while it was still safe. It was hard for all of us to give up our time of retreat and prayer, but we decided to try and make the best of the time we had. During the two nights we were together we shared and prayed and sang together. It was a good, good time. Our field has been through some tough times in the last year or so, so we decided it was time to bind together as we move forward in ministry. The team would leave then on Saturday morning and be home by Sunday in good time before the strike.

On Thursday, however, we received word that there had been some trouble already in one of the closer cities to us and we all decided it would be best to try and get everyone out as soon as possible. The trouble was we were still waiting for Andrea's driver's license. We hoped to get them on the road by Friday just after lunch, then home on Saturday. The license took longer than we thought and they didn't get out until 5:00 PM and had at least 5 hours to drive yet. They arrived in Mamou last night at 11:30, very tired. They took off from there at 6:30 AM. I should mention too that on the way down they were met by a mob of people in Dabola, a town about half way between here and their home. They were able to get through, but it was a bit unsettling. They did have some trouble again in Dabola but are all fine. They should reach home tonight.

We're hearing now that the president did indeed name a new prime minister last night, however he does not meet with the criteria set by the syndicate and so people are very angry. Some are determined to start the strike today which is earlier than previously reported. We've had reports already all across the country of problems, but mostly people throwing rocks. Some areas have already deployed military to try and keep peace.

Please also pray for Katie. Remember that broken foot?? We found out recently (now that she is somewhere with an x-ray machine) that it was not set right (actually I don't remember it being "set" at all, only put into a cast) and that's why she has continued to have trouble with it. Not sure where we're going with that yet. Also she has been experiencing a horrendous burning in her esophagus and we're not sure why. She can hardly eat or drink. Some at the Academy there have said that it may be that she took her doxycycline (anti-malarial) and it got stuck in there, dissolved, and has burned her esophagus. She hasn't eaten much in about 4 days now, so we're concerned for her. With all that plus what is happening here plus being in a new school it's been a tough week.

So we're asking for prayers today. I don't know if I can get this letter out even. Our internet connection has been on and off for a few days now and is off right now, so I pray it comes up for a while. We are all fine and things in our quartier have remained calm so far. Please pray for the country of Guinea and the people here. Pray that this can be dealt with calmly and that God will hold back any evil that is trying to take advantage of this situation. Will send more info as I can.

Thanks so much for your prayers.
In Christ, the Heineys

Dear Friends,

Heiney Update, 2/13/07

Things have deteriorated horribly here in Guinea. People do not even talk about the strike anymore as people are taking to the streets on their own now. After the naming of Eugene Camara for Prime Minister, a man NOT one of those listed on the approved list, violence began erupting from different parts of the country. Yesterday was a nightmare, not so much because of our own situation but because of our team that we had sent out the day before.

I mentioned in the last letter that Tim and Heidi, their kids, and Andrea had left Mamou, 5 hours from us, and headed to Siguiiri. On going through the town of Dabola they were met by a small crowd of angry people swinging machetes. They began throwing rocks at the vehicles. Tim and Heidi had a window busted out on their truck. Blessedly it was the one window that had no one sitting by it, the children were on the other side of the truck. Once out of town the two trucks stopped to do some damage control and remove the glass. Come to find out, Andrea had TWO windows broken out of her truck. They tried to clean up and get back on the road right away. Just outside Kouroussa, a town closer to home, some motorists stopped and told them that things were very hot in that town, so they decided to get off the main road. The going was slower but they were finally home by about 6:00 that evening. Meanwhile we had heard nothing since 10:00 that morning, and that was after the incident in Dabola!! Talk about urgent prayers going up!! We were so thankful to hear that they were home and safe.

Gangs of people have been robbing and looting government agencies, buildings, and businesses, even the homes of government officials, to show their disapproval of what is going on. Some blockades have been put up. Even in the town of Siguiiri where the Nortons live, the hotel was vandalized and looted. They called this morning and we decided it would be best for them to pack up and head to Bamako until things calm down a bit. We are keeping our ears to the radio and have our bags ready in case the word comes to move. We pray it does not come to that but just want to be ready. All are staying indoors now. Still, I have to say, we have not seen anything here in our neighborhood and are happy for that. We're still praying that the military will be able to get things under control until this is all worked out. Thanks for your prayers for us in this!!

I'm going to try and attach a photo we took of our team while we were all together. Andrea is all the way to the left. Tim Norton is in the left chair and Heidi is just above him. Donna Meyer, Andrea's teacher, is between my Andrea and myself. The Norton's children, Philip and Leslie, are on the laps of the two Tims.

Our internet is already down, so if you don't hear from us that's why. Tim is going to try and make it over to the mission later to see if he can send this out. Phones are still working for which we are thankful.

May God be with Guinea!!

In Christ, The Heineys

Dear Friends,

Heiney Update, 2/13/07

Things have taken a real turn for the worse here. This will be fast. We are not allowed out of the house but for 4 hours each day (martial law). Many are trying to get out of the country now, so we are watching for our time. There is not much else to say but that we ask you to pray for us and for all here. There is a lot of gunfire around but so far it's just military shooting out and others responding. The Embassy may evacuate soon and that's when we would go. Our internet is down. Tim is going to try and get this out from the CMA mission now so I must sign off.

Thanks for your prayers!! Love, beth for all

Dear Friends,

Heiney Update, 2/14/07

I have no idea why this internet came up today but we are on line for a bit from our house!!!

It's hard to remember what I have written and what I haven't. It's hard to even say what's going on!! It feels like we've been in solitary confinement for a while now...no internet, we ran out of cards for our phone so only had incoming calls. We do have the radio but there just hasn't been a lot of news.

I want to write this quickly just in case this isn't going to stay on for very long. Basically the country is shut down. The president declared martial law two days ago and we have all of 4 hours a day when cars are allowed on the road. Yesterday a flight took off with some family members from the American Embassy. The airport is not functioning as normal, though. We did hear there was an Air France flight that came in last night and was going out as well but was totally full. There may be another coming in tonight but we're not sure. Otherwise flights are not going in or out. The gunfire has slowed down considerably which makes it a lot easier. Last night when curfew ended things almost looked normal. Cars were on the road, people were out of the house (including us!!). That's when Tim made the dash to the CMA to get our mail out. It is getting a bit discouraging in that many have left now. Several missions were able to get some of their own people on the US plane that went out but we don't have those connections. Just a few families left now. We're to the point that we wish it would either break or finish. Just sitting here not knowing and not being able to do anything is frustrating. If we leave we will probably head to Dakar where everyone else is headed, since Katie is there. Also, Tim was supposed to leave for teaching in Togo tomorrow. That doesn't look possible anymore.

So what to pray for?? I guess just that everything finishes one way or another. At least if there is trouble we'll get out. If not then we can get back to some kind of normalcy. Thanks for all your prayers. We do continue to trust that God is in control of all this and that He is our protection. Thanks too for all the notes of support. We appreciate all the prayers for us here. The Nortons and Andrea are fine too, up in Bamako, but also anxious to see this end. Will continue to keep in touch as we can!!

Love, beth for all

Dear Friends,

Heiney Update, 2/15/07

There is a flight going out today sponsored by the US Embassy that will be taking out American citizens. There are 40 seats available so the missionaries are putting in requests to be included. Pray that we are all able to get on and out of Guinea!! Again, we don't feel as if we are in danger, more like we are sitting on a powder keg watching the flame get closer and closer. If we can't make this flight we do have reservations for a Saturday flight. We are going to Dakar, where Katie is, and will try and wait from there to see what happens over here.

We have been overwhelmed with the amount of support we have seen through all this. Thank you to those of you praying and to those passing our requests on for others to pray as well. Maybe that is the reason for the peace passing all human understanding that we have felt through all this!!

We pray that the next letter will be from Dakar!!

Love in Christ,

The Heineys

Dear Friends,

Heiney Update, 2/16/07

Thank you for all your prayers. We got word just after noon yesterday that we were indeed to fly out of Conakry and needed to be at the airport by 1:00. We were all set to go just in case, so ran around giving last minute directions to our guards, throwing in last minute stuff and making sure the house was ready to shut down. There was a caravan of missionary vehicles that we joined from our street and we were off. We were shocked at what we saw. While things looked fairly normal in our area it was not so in other areas of town. We passed roads full of broken out glass with myriads of burned out vehicles off to the side. Gas stations were totally destroyed and looted. Small boutique shops that had been attached to the stations were just three walls and a roof. Pumps were just gone. Some had reported that people were going down into the tanks where fuel was stored and were bucketing fuel out. Bodies were later found in the tanks from people that had fallen in trying to get their share. It was horrific to see. The damage that was done will take a long time to repair. We sped to the airport as fast as possible and met no trouble along the road for which we were very thankful.

Once at the airport we followed the directions of the embassy representative who explained how things would be done. After waiting close to 5 hours we were finally bussed out to the military Air Force airplane that was to take us out. What a thrill to see armed American soldiers waiting next to that big gray plane!! It was a real experience. Definitely "no frills", canvas seats lined along the sides of the plane. We did get ear plugs to help with the noise. I think we were all just in awe of it all.

Once in Dakar (Senegal) we were whisked right through the airport and taken to a nearby hotel where there were sandwiches and water, a play area for kids, information centers on Dakar and possible flights for those continuing on, and a phone line where we got to call the boys. Good friends of ours here in Dakar had also picked up Katie at school and brought her along so she was there to meet us as well. I think it was then that we finally just relaxed. We were finally out!

So what next?? We don't really have any idea at this point. Right now we're just enjoying the feeling of being safe and not jumping every time shots ring out!! Tim was actually scheduled to fly to Togo FROM DAKAR tomorrow, so he may be able to just catch his connecting flight from here and go on, depending on what we find out about how things will work here. We'll continue to work with our mission on what our long term plans are and what we'll do in the future. Meanwhile, please do not slow down prayers for Guinea because we are out. We want things to work out so that Work can continue and we can all get back to our homes. There are also still some missionaries in Guinea. Some have chosen to stay, some can't get out. Please keep them covered in prayer daily.

Will keep you informed as we have news.

In Christ, Tim, Beth, Katie, and Andrea Heiney

Dear Friends,

Heiney Update, 2/20/07

Well it's been almost a week since we were whisked away from our homes with but a suitcase of belongings. It's been a time of decompressing and "crashing" as we try and settle in for who knows how long. The first couple of days here were spent unpacking, settling, and getting Tim ready for his trip to Togo. As I mentioned before, Tim had already been slated to do a 2 week course at our seminary in Dapaong, Togo. His ticket out of Guinea was for the same day we actually left and it took him to Dakar. He was to spend two days here visiting Katie and then continue on. So he was still able to catch the second leg of his trip. For those of you wondering how he could "dump" his family and head out, believe me, it was all for the best. He is teaching and keeping busy. Andrea and I had already spent a week here so we were not coming to

unfamiliar territory. Donna is here with us so Andrea started school again yesterday. We brought the books she would need, so she hasn't missed much through all this. I brought enough files to keep me busy, plus with all the email we've been getting I'm not idle!

Many have been writing and asking how we are and where we are, etc. We are staying about 2 blocks from Katie's school at a guesthouse run by the CMA mission. So Katie is able to visit often and we can go visit her at school as well. She's doing much better, by the way. We still have to figure out what to do about that foot. Her x-rays are being sent to the US and we'll wait to see what is recommended. It bothers her a lot. But her esophagus seems to be healing up and she can eat again.

Our colleagues, Tim and Heidi Norton and Andrea Herman are also doing well. They are in a guesthouse in Bamako run by Norwegian Lutherans there who had also been "refugees" at one point so have been very sympathetic to their situation. Andrea is starting her language work as there are Maninka in that area. They were able to "debrief" with a counselor from the Southern Baptist mission and that has helped a lot. We will do our debriefing this Thursday when counselors are available for those of us here who had to run.

But always not far from our minds is our home and Guinea. What does the future hold? What will the country look like if we are able to someday go back? Will we have a home to come back to? There was a good article in the Times recently you may want to check out if you have a chance:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/20/world/africa/20guinea.html?ref=world>

Please continue to pray for the country. I do believe this will go to the end one way or another. Also pray for the missionaries that are still there, that God keeps them safe. And pray for our church there and our leaders. We did hear from them just before we left and the situation there was much like it was in Conakry. Pray for their safety and for a good change in Guinea for the people.

We can't thank you all enough for all the prayers, notes, and words of encouragement we have received. I thought of that last Thursday as I stared at the great big grey Air Force plane I was standing beside, imagining the wings being lifted with the prayers of thousands. May those prayers now blanket the entire country of Guinea until we can return again to its shores!!

In Christ,

Tim (from Togo), Beth, Katie, and Andrea (from Dakar)



Front Row: Tim & Leslie Norton, Tim Heiney & Philip Norton

Back Row: Andrea Herman, Heidi Norton, Beth Heiney, Donna Meyer, Andrea Heiney